

D# 07 ALLEYS IN RC, R-1, AND R-4 ZONES

General Description

The City currently has requirements that state alleys are the preferred street pattern as part of new subdivisions. In 2007, Council supported an appeal to not require an alley system in a new subdivision within a residential low density zone. Council asked that subdivision code related to alleys be evaluated to differentiate where the alley network is appropriate, providing policy direction for this docket item.

Before approval of a new subdivision plat without alley access, an alley layout must have been evaluated and determined that alleys are not feasible. For new residential large lot subdivisions in lower density zoning districts, the inclusion of alleys as part of the street network are not appropriate compared with higher density zones with smaller lot sizes. The code should be clarified, to not require alleys in the Resource Conservation (RC) and Residential 1 dwelling unit per acre (R-1) zones. For the Residential 4 dwelling units per acre (R-4) zone, alleys should not be required, but be allowed or prescribed when the plat is allowed greater density, clustering of lots, skinnier lot widths, or other variables that provide a basis for using an alley system.

Impact Analysis

Effect on rate of growth, development, and conversion of land as envisioned in the Plan

Minimal impact is foreseen. Although alleys are excluded in calculating net density, minimal lot standards may not allow as many lots when alleys are required. An example of this could be where critical areas within a lot being subdivided combined with an alley requirement allows less lots within the subdivision, therefore a lower number of residences would be developed. Although alleys may not allow for the maximum amount of lots in all cases, there are other factors that can impact density including the width of required streets.

Effect on the City's capacity to provide adequate public facilities

No impact is foreseen. Alleys can allow for the placement of utilities such as electricity and sewer to be provided in the alleyway rather than in the frontage areas of homes in streets.

Effect on the rate of population and employment growth

Minimal impact is foreseen. Potentially, there could be a slight increase in population growth than expected. This would be due to the ability of plats to fully utilize a site to maximize the number of lots without the potential layout constraint of including alleys.

Whether Plan objectives are being met as specified or remain valid and desirable

Plan objectives remain valid and desirable in consideration of this proposal. Comprehensive Plan policies state that a grid type or flexible grid street network is desired by the City. Whether alleys are part of the lower density residential development standards or not, a grid network that creates connections through neighborhoods and throughout the City can occur.

Effect on general land values or housing costs

Minimal, if any, impact is foreseen. By not requiring alleys as part of large lot residential projects, the costs of alley development could contribute to lower housing costs.

Whether capital improvements or expenditures are being made or completed as expected
Not applicable.

Consistency with GMA, the Plan, and Countywide Planning Policies

Not requiring alleys within lower density, large lot developments, is consistent with state, county, and local planning policies as long as connectivity through developments to allow for multi-modal access to different places in neighborhoods is not taken away in not requiring alleyways in all plats where they are feasible. Connectivity is an important aspect of vehicular and non-vehicular travel through Renton and its neighborhoods.

Effect on critical areas and natural resource lands

There is minimal, if any, effect on critical areas and natural resource lands.

Effect on other considerations

No impacts are foreseen.

Staff Recommendation

The City currently has requirements that states alleys are the preferred street pattern as part of new subdivisions which provide an alternative vehicular access point to a property and a more traditional community design in urban areas. Throughout Renton, there are street networks with alleys, some developed in the turn of the 20th century in North and South Renton, some developed in the Highlands in mid century, and more recently, in new developments in the Northeast 4th Street corridor area.

New residential large lot subdivisions in lower density zoning districts do not make sense for the inclusion of alleys as part of a new street network. In 2007, Council approved an appeal by a developer who appealed the required inclusion of alleys for a project in the R-4 zone. In addition to concurring with the Planning & Development Committee's recommendation to support the appeal, Council recommended that the section of the code that requires alleys be re-evaluated to see whether an amendment is necessary to limit the application of this alley provision to small lots.

Implementation Requirements

Within the streets standards where alley access is stated as the preferred pattern of development, language should be added to state that alleys are not required for residential low density zones unless determined by the Administrator in cases where there are increases in density, where an alley network would make sense, etc. Alleys would still be the preferred pattern of development for other zones. A change would be made to RMC section 4-7-150.E.